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Food Protection Program Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Issue: Adequate Protection of Food on Display

No: RF 3-7

Public Health Rationale:

Food while on display can be contaminated even when there is no direct hand contact. Microbes can be conveyed considerable distances on air currents, through fine sprays or aerosols. These microbes may originate from people breathing or sneezing, water sprays directed at drains, or condensate from air conditioners. Even wind gusts across sewage deposits and fertilized fields have been known to contaminate food in adjacent establishments where food was unprotected. Section 3-306 of the federal *1999 Food Code* addresses the prevention of contamination of food while on display.

Federal/State Regulations:

Food protection provisions can be found in the federal *1999 Food Code*, section 3-306.11 - Food Display, as referenced by section 590.004 of the 105 CMR 590.000, State Sanitary Code Chapter X - Minimum Sanitation Standards for Food Establishments. Section 3-306.11, Food Display, states: "...", food on display shall be protected from contamination by the use of packaging; counter, service line, or salad bar food guards; display cases; or other effective means.

Prevention Measures:

- To prevent contamination of exposed food from consumer sneezes or coughs, a food shield or sneeze-guard that intercepts the direct line between the customer's mouth and the food on display shall be provided. If a food shield or sneeze guard is used, proper design and installation is important.
- To prevent the potential of cross-contamination between ready-to-eat and raw ready-to-eat foods, there should be adequate separation between these items.
- It is the responsibility of the person-in-charge (PIC) to ensure good hygienic practices and sanitary food handling practices in consumer self-service operations, such as buffet lines and salad bars, as follows:
 1. Ensure that suitable utensils or effective dispensing methods are provided that protect the food from direct hand contact contamination and that consumer self-service

- operations are monitored by trained food employees. [FC section 3-306.13 (B) and (C)]
2. Ensure that employees are properly trained in food safety as it relates to their assigned duties. [FC section 2-103.11 (L)]
 3. Ensure that consumers are using clean tableware, (i.e. dishes and silverware), for second portions and refills. [FC section 3-304.16]
 4. Ensure that dispensing utensils are provided for each container displayed on the buffet line or salad bar. [FC section 4-302.11]

Resources:

There is a guideline provided by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Conference for Food Protection (CFP), that can be found in the “Food Establishment Plan Review Guide” which has been developed for the purpose of assisting both regulatory and industry personnel in achieving greater uniformity in the plan review process. This document can be found at the website <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/previntr.html>. Section III of this document is the Food Establishment Guide for Design, Installation, and Construction Recommendations and Part 3 addresses Facilities to Protect Food. Additional guidance can be found in the National Sanitation Foundation Standard No. 2 for Food Service Equipment.

For additional information, please contact the Massachusetts Food Protection Program at: 617-983-6700.